



On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) upgraded the status of the COVID-19 outbreak from [epidemic to pandemic](#). A day earlier, on 10 March, [Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#) stated that COVID-19 “can affect anyone and it is our collective responsibility to ensure that the global response includes all people.” Since 16 March, the Government of Ukraine introduced restrictions aimed at mitigating the risks related to the spread of coronavirus infection. Among other measures, the restrictions related to crossing of the contact line in the east (through the Order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Joint Forces) and across the administrative border with Crimea (through the Decree 291-R of the Cabinet of Ministers as of 14 March 2020) were introduced. For the period of quarantine measures, the residence registration determines who can

cross the contact line and in which direction: Individuals with residence registration in non-government-controlled areas (NGCA) or Crimea can enter NGCA/Crimea respectively, while individuals with residence registration in government-controlled areas (GCA) can enter GCA. In short, people are allowed to travel to the home registered in their passports. Under these regulations, **IDP certificates are not considered as a proof of residence in GCA.**

Since the restrictions were announced less than 24 hours in advance, they have **severely impacted freedom of movement across the contact line (only a small fraction of the usual number of travellers is present – see photos taken in Stanysia Luhanska today) and caused a series of complications for persons who wanted to cross.** On the first day of restrictions enforcement (16 March), NGOs, including UNHCR’s partners Proliska, Donbas SOS and Right to Protection, received over 450 individual inquiries (in person through monitors present at EECPs and through hotlines) regarding problems with crossing. These include but are not limited to:



- IDPs who traveled for a short-term visit to NGCA, (e.g., to check on their property) and could not return before the measures were introduced;
- IDP students who have residence registration at their dormitories in GCA. The dormitories have been closed, and the students are not allowed to return home to their parents in NGCA;
- Residents of NGCA with chronic illnesses; they depend on medicines available only in GCA;
- Individuals with ID cards and without documents to confirm residence registration (e.g., at Mairorsk there are no ID reading machines);
- Individuals without residence registration at all (many ID-holders from NGCA have not been able to obtain any document confirming residence registration);
- Mothers who traveled for a short period and are separated from their minor children;
- Women who have residence registration in GCA, but who actually reside in NGCA to care for elderly parents;
- Couples who are separated because husband and wife have residence registration in different locations (GCA and NGCA);
- Pensioners who came for verification/identification/other business, wish to return home, but cannot confirm residence registration in NGCA;

Examples of Individual Stories

Woman registered in Luhansk NGCA. She has an IDP certificate and lives in Kyiv. She went to NGCA to visit her newborn great-grandson. Now she cannot return home to Kyiv.

Student, studying in Kyiv, and has only a student card. Both his university and hostel were quarantined. She was not allowed to travel to Donetsk to self-quarantine with her parents; she has nowhere to self-quarantine in Kyiv.

An elderly woman, left Donetsk for GCA to receive her retirement benefits and register herself in Zaporizhia (although she actually lives in Donetsk city), but was refused to return home.

Elderly woman registered in Ivano-Frankivsk (GCA), but actually lives in the city of Krasny Luch (NGCA). Went to GCA to buy medicine for her paralyzed husband and now cannot return home.

Response at the EECp: Please note that UNHCR’s NGO partner Proliska provided **temporary accommodation** to all those who became stranded in the five EECPs along the contact line. Additionally, even though Proliska intervened to try to resolve these cases, most were not allowed through the contact line. For example, on 16 March, **out of 52 cases, only five were let through.**